

Recommendations from the  
East Cambridge Neighborhood Study (1989)

Prepared for the  
East Cambridge Neighborhood Study Update  
November, 2005

City of Cambridge • Community Development Department

## Land Use and Zoning Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS
LU1 Undertake a study to rezone the areas that include First to Second Street, the office districts south of Binney Street and the industrial area between Charles and Binney Streets from Third Street to Fulkerson Street. As part of this process, the Community Development Department should work with a committee of residents and property owners to prepare a permanent rezoning petition for the above priority areas	This area was rezoned as part of the Eastern Cambridge Rezoning, which was developed through the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study by a committee of residents working with city staff and professional consultants.
LU2 Institute an interim zoning measure, which would place a uniform height and density limit in the areas that are being studied for permanent rezoning. This temporary zoning would protect the East Cambridge neighborhood against new, large-scale development that could otherwise occur during the rezoning process.	While the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study was underway, a moratorium was imposed restricting development in the areas being studied.
LU3 Create a First Street Overlay District, which would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage mixed-use projects, especially a retail and housing mix.</li><li>• Promote the development of affordable housing.</li><li>• Create a unified image on First Street in which every project would be subject to design review.</li><li>• Reduce the amount of potential development.</li><li>• Reduce allowable heights of buildings adjacent to the residential area of Second Street</li></ul>	Zoning regulations for the area around First Street were changed in the Eastern Cambridge Rezoning, mainly through the creation of the PUD 4, 4A, and 4B districts. Affordable housing is also encouraged through the Inclusionary Zoning requirement.
LU4 Consider rezoning the Commonwealth Energy Site to achieve a reduction in allowable height and density.	This site is currently under development as “Cambridge Research Park.” An effort was made to rezone this area, but no new zoning was implemented. The development currently underway was permitted following an extensive review process, and was subject to specific density controls, traffic mitigation requirements, and public review.

## Land Use and Zoning Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
LU5	Study the rezoning of the IA-1/IB-1 zones (Fulkerson and Binney Streets) to promote mixed use development, including office, housing, light industry, and open space buffer along Fulkerson Street near the Metro Pipe site. The new zoning should promote compatible development with the existing residential area.	This area was rezoned as part of the Eastern Cambridge Rezoning. The Eastern Cambridge Housing Overlay (ECHO) district encourages residential use but allows a wide range of commercial and light industrial uses as well.
LU6	The Community Development Department should work closely with the Inspectional Services Department and other city agencies to develop procedures by which the abutters and relevant neighborhood groups are notified of proposed development projects filed with the city. Developer might be required to meet with the residents before the project is approved or disapproved. While the neighborhood recommendations would be advisory, the developer and city should take the concerns and recommendations of the neighborhood into account. The existing development consultation procedures in the zoning ordinance, which already apply to certain area in the city, could be an appropriate mechanism to consider.	Any developer seeking a special permit from the Planning Board or a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal must undergo a public hearing at which interested residents may review and comment on the proposed development. Public hearings are advertised with a poster on site and mailings to abutting property owners and others who have expressed interest. The Citywide Rezoning in 2001 made all projects of 50,000 square feet or more subject to a special permit from the Planning Board.
LU7	If the U.S. Congress approves the sale of the federal Department of Transportation property on Binney Street, the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and the Community Development Department should establish a neighborhood advisory committee to develop a master plan for the area. Building housing on this site, with a strong component of affordable housing, should be the principal development goal.	The Department of Transportation site was rezoned as part of the Eastern Cambridge Rezoning, but there is currently no known plan for the sale or redevelopment of that site.
LU8	Affordable housing development should be promoted along Fulkerson Street, south of the FAR Group projects, down to Binney Street.	An affordable housing component is required in all large housing projects through the Inclusionary Zoning provision, and housing is encouraged in that area through the provisions of the Eastern Cambridge Housing Overlay district.

## Land Use and Zoning Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS
LU9    Assure that proper parking ratios are maintained as development occurs in the areas between First and Third Streets and in the industrial district. The Committee strongly believes that developers should be required to replace parking which is lost.	Parking requirements are governed both by the zoning ordinance, including the Article 19 traffic study review for large projects, and by the Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance, which applies to businesses and developers creating new parking. The city's priority is to reduce the demand for parking by reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips made by employees.
LU10   Promote a strong visual and pedestrian connection from the development areas on the periphery of the neighborhood to the East Cambridge residential district as was done in the East Cambridge Riverfront district. These development areas should be viewed as an integral part of the East Cambridge residential neighborhood.	The Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines developed in the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study encourage pedestrian and visual connections throughout new development areas, and particularly along pathways leading to public transit, public parks, and the Charles River.
LU11   If the city decides to reuse the old fire station on Third and Gore Streets, first priority should be given to reuse as a community service facility for East Cambridge residents.	This building is presently used by the Cambridge Electrical Department as a shop and for storage of equipment. If the building were to be converted to another use, a suitable replacement site would need to be found for the current use. At one time it was considered as a potential affordable housing project, but it was decided at the time that rehabilitation of the building would be prohibitively costly.

## Transportation Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
TP1	Reduce the number of trucks going through residential areas in the following ways: a.) Study the possibility of restricting through truck traffic on Charles Street between Third and Sixth Streets. b.) Step up enforcement of areas where trucks are restricted such as on Third Street. c.) Add truck route signs at appropriate locations.	A citizen committee was formed to create a truck management plan for Cambridge. However, the recommended truck restrictions have not been approved at the state level. Currently, East Cambridge has a designated, posted truck route that includes Main Street, Galileo Galilei Way, Binney Street, First Street, and Land Boulevard.
TP2	Establish a plan to make the East Cambridge garage available to residents during snow emergencies.	The municipal garage on First Street is currently available for resident parking during snow emergencies.
TP3	Formulate a plan for a one-way street system in East Cambridge. The Traffic Department with assistance from the Community Development Department should form and work closely with a neighborhood committee representing geographic distribution across the neighborhood.	After consideration by the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department along with neighborhood residents, it was decided that a one-way street system through the residential neighborhood would not be desirable because it would make it more difficult for residents to get to their homes. A system of stop signs at alternating intersections was adopted instead.
TP4	Undertake a comprehensive study to determine the need for adding parking spaces on Cambridge Street.	During the creation of the Cambridge Street Action Plan, community members expressed that it was important to maintain and improve the supply of parking on Cambridge Street. As a result of the Cambridge Street renovations, the amount of free, handicap, and metered parking on Cambridge Street has been increased by over 20 spaces.

## Transportation Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
TP5	Establish strict traffic mitigation measures for all new development projects in East Cambridge. This plan should be presented to all developers proposing new projects in East Cambridge.	As part of the Article 19 special permit review process established in the 2001 Citywide Rezoning, any project receiving a project review special permit, including projects of at least 50,000 square feet of new development, must submit a traffic and parking plan to be reviewed by the city staff and the Planning Board, and must plan for mitigation of any adverse impacts. In addition, businesses and developers creating new parking must prepare a Parking and Transportation Demand Management plan with the goal of reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips made by employees.
TP6	Work with the owner of the Twin City Mall to install a walkway from Gore Street into the mall.	As part of the Gold Star Mothers Park improvements process, the Community Development Department has worked with the Twin Cities Plaza management to connect the park walkways to the shopping center entrances. New lighting will also be installed along the park pathways.

## Transportation Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
TP7	Ensure that the new Lechmere T-Station is highly accessible to residents and that there are ample shuttle bus connections from the T-Station to businesses in the area. The Committee also encourages both a pedestrian overpass and an at-grade pedestrian crossing to the new T-Station.	The idea of a pedestrian overpass or underpass was considered during planning for the Cambridge Street reconstruction as well as in the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study. Currently, the plan is to include a new signalized crossing of Monsignor O'Brien Highway to allow pedestrians to cross safely at-grade. It was determined that if an at-grade crossing is available, an overpass or underpass would be underutilized.
TP8	Encourage the State to speed up the roadway improvements on Binney Street.	The Binney Street roadway improvements were completed around 1994.
TP9	Assist the County in implementing measures that would encourage employees to use public transportation and would discourage employees from parking in the residential area. The County should also participate in the mitigation program for East Cambridge Riverfront district.	Middlesex County offices are currently not subject to Parking and Transportation Demand Management requirements, though employees must follow normal on-street parking regulations. The city is willing to assist the county in implementing transportation demand management programs.
TP10	Examine the potential benefits and impacts of opening up the median at Binney Street and Fulkerson Street.	A median break and new traffic signal are being planned at this location to encourage traffic from One Kendall Square to continue along Binney Street instead of turning left onto Fulkerson Street. Amgen and Lyme Properties are working with the city on this project, which is planned to be completed in 2006.

## Housing Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS
<p>H1 Examine the conversion of three family homes to condominiums to determine its effect on the supply of affordable housing and to determine if such conversions can be a potential resource for creating new homeownership opportunities, such as forms of limited equity ownership.</p>	<p>Data on condominium conversions are available in the <i>Housing Information Report</i> published by the Community Development Department and available on the CDD website. CDD works with non-profit partners and the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to create and preserve affordable units throughout the city, rental and owner-occupied, through construction and rehabilitation projects.</p>
<p>H2 Improve the condition of existing housing stock in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a.) Continue to target public resources for housing rehabilitation to low and moderate income residents.</li><li>b.) Continue to explore ways to upgrade rent-controlled housing.</li><li>c.) Continue to work with neighborhood non-profit agencies to deliver housing rehabilitation services.</li></ul>	<p>Through the Home Improvement Program and the Cambridge Neighborhood Affordable Housing Service, the city and non-profit partners provide loans and technical assistance to homeowners and landlords to renovate their properties, and encourage rental prices to be kept affordable to low and moderate income households.</p>
<p>H3 Construct new affordable housing for low and moderate income homebuyers and renters in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a.) Identify all publicly owned vacant and under-utilized buildings.</li><li>b.) Seek all available public subsidies from the federal, state, and local governments.</li><li>c.) Work with private developers to include affordable units in all new housing developments.</li></ul>	<p>The city works with non-profit partners and the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to create and preserve affordable housing units throughout the city. Since 1995, more than 2,700 affordable units citywide have been created or preserved due to these efforts. Cambridge's Inclusionary Zoning, adopted in 1998, requires housing developments of ten or more units to include units affordable to low and moderate income households.</p>



## Housing Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
H4	Continue to assist low-income elderly homeowners to remain in their homes by targeting housing rehabilitation services to them.	The Home Improvement Program is actively marketed to all homeowners, and many program participants are seniors.
H5	Consider ways in which rent control can better serve low and moderate income people and how small property owners can be better informed and educated about the rules and procedures of rent control.	Due to state law, rent control in Cambridge was phased out between 1995 and 1997. The city and local non-profit organizations work with property owners to improve multifamily housing properties and keep their units affordably priced.
H6	Widely publicize the various tax abatement programs available to seniors and residents with disabilities.	There are several property tax exemptions and deferrals available to seniors, veterans, and persons with disabilities. Information on these abatements is available from the City Assessing Department and on the city's website. CDD staff refer homeowners to the Assessing Department for information about abatements they might qualify for.
H7	Update housing data and statistics each year, such as housing sales and condominium conversions, and make this information available to East Cambridge residents.	Data on housing sale prices and condominium conversions are available in the <i>Housing Information Report</i> published by the Community Development Department and available on the CDD website.
H8	Work with private developers and public agencies to ensure that all new housing developments are built in scale and character with the surrounding neighborhood.	The scale of new housing is regulated through the city's zoning ordinance. Through the special permit review process – Article 19 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance – large development projects undergo a review to assess whether their design is appropriate within the neighborhood context.

## Economic Development Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

The 1989 *East Cambridge Neighborhood Study* contained a chapter and a set of recommendations related to the “Cambridge Street Business District.” Since these deal with the economic health and vitality of neighborhood businesses, they are included in the “Economic Development” section of this study update.

	RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS
CS1	Undertake a study of parking problems on Cambridge Street. This study should address the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Study the need for parking for residents of Cambridge Street and the costs and benefits of providing such parking.</li><li>b) Target specific areas where more parking spaces could be provided for both residential and commercial parking.</li><li>c) Enforce parking regulations for the most frequent violations such as double-parking and parking violations near the courthouse.</li><li>d) Study the possibility of reducing the size of some loading zones to free up more metered parking.</li></ul>	The Cambridge Street Action Plan, created in 1997, led to a full reconstruction of the Cambridge Street roadway and sidewalks that was completed in 2004. Community members expressed that it was important to maintain and improve the supply of parking on Cambridge Street, and so as part of the reconstruction, the amount of free, handicap, and metered parking on Cambridge Street has been increased by over 20 spaces.
CS2	Start a comprehensive business assistance program, such as the National Main Street Program, with the following goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Encourage the stability and growth of locally owned small businesses.</li><li>b) Upgrade the physical structures and public areas.</li><li>c) Strengthen the local business association to improve planning and marketing.</li><li>d) Promote the active community involvement of residents and businesses in improvements and activities.</li></ul>	The business assistance programs provided by the Economic Development Division in the Community Development Department play a similar function to the programs offered through the National Main Streets Program. The development of the Cambridge Street Action Plan served as an opportunity both to actively involve members of the community in planning issues and to promote assistance programs to businesses along Cambridge Street.

## Economic Development Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS
<p>CS3 As part of the business assistance program stated above, the following steps should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Undertake a survey of existing businesses to determine ownership and rental patterns, lease terms, financial stability, and business plan needs.</li><li>b) Undertake a survey of residential structures to determine number of units, the percentage of rent controlled units and physical condition.</li><li>c) Study resident shopping patterns and needs.</li><li>d) Provide outreach and access to financial and technical assistance for business owners.</li><li>e) Improve store signs and encourage more uniform signs.</li><li>f) Upgrade building facades.</li><li>g) Encourage business owners and the city to play a more active role in clean-up and maintenance.</li><li>h) Provide more trash receptacles.</li><li>i) Clean up the seating area adjacent to the Miller's River development and ensure that this area is well-maintained.</li><li>j) Initiate periodic promotional clean-up events with businesses and residents.</li><li>k) Enforce the city ordinance, which prohibits trash from being placed on the sidewalk more than 12 hours prior to pick-up.</li></ul>	<p>Many of these issues have been addressed through the Cambridge Street roadway improvements and the Economic Development Division's business assistance programs. In addition, the Economic Development Division uses surveys to gather information about retail spaces in the city and consumer shopping patterns.</p>

## Open Space Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
OS1	The City is currently working on developing a comprehensive maintenance plan for Cambridge parks. As part of this effort, the City should examine ways to improve the coordination among the various city agencies involved in park service and explore the centralization of planning, development and maintenance under a single agency.	The Open Space Committee, consisting of representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Community Development Department, the Department of Human Service Programs, the Conservation Commission, the Electrical Department, and the Water Department, was created to coordinate park planning, development and maintenance.
OS2	Initiate a pilot program to involve residents in park beautification and maintenance. The City should work with residents by targeting one East Cambridge park and forming a neighborhood committee to implement a small-scale program.	The Open Space Committee has discussed a possible framework for creating “Adopt-A-Park” groups, and may implement a pilot program in the future.
OS3	Increase the resources for recreation programming in East Cambridge parks. In addition, the City should establish a training program and a summer internship program to train staff associated with the new programs.	A number of Cambridge’s recreational programs use East Cambridge’s parks and facilities, including Cambridge Youth Soccer, Girls Youth Softball, Cambridge Youth Hockey, and adult softball leagues. Also, the playgrounds at Gold Star Mothers Park and Ahern Field have recreation staff during the summer. Youth interns provide the staffing for many of Cambridge’s summer recreational programs. More information is available from the Recreation Division at 617-349-6200.

## Open Space Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
OS4	Address the problems of security and vandalism in East Cambridge parks by: a) Increased police presence and lighting in the parks. b) Strict enforcement of the 10:00p.m. curfew.	The city works to improve lighting so as to improve safety in all of the parks it renovates. All newly-renovated parks also have emergency call boxes so that park users can communicate directly with Cambridge Police to report suspicious or illegal activity. The Department of Public Works also now has a “graffiti hotline” – 617-349-6955 – to report graffiti on public property so that it can be removed as quickly as possible.
OS5	The newly developed East Cambridge parks should be dedicated to Luke Agnetta and Tom Walker in memory of their long and dedicated service to the community.	The process of dedicating parks and other public property to individuals falls under the purview of the Cambridge City Council.
OS6	Enhance the design of future East Cambridge park renovations by considering: a) Clearly defined play areas and uses for people of different ages. b) A performance area. c) Better lighting. d) More benches. e) More trash receptacles.	The city works to provide open space and recreational resources to residents of all ages, by providing a variety of different types of playgrounds, athletic fields and playing courts, passive use spaces, and other facilities. Improved lighting has been a part of most recent park renovation projects, and the city also works to ensure that its parks meet a high standard in terms of fencing material, trash receptacles, furniture, and signage. Most new and newly renovated parks also include bulletin boards for community posting.

## Open Space Recommendations from 1989 East Cambridge Neighborhood Study

---

RECOMMENDATION		PROGRESS
OS7	Post signs in East Cambridge parks to encourage residents to keep the park clean.	The city has a standardized set of signage that it uses to encourage park users to keep parks clean, including signs reminding users to clean up after dogs. The Open Space Committee is also creating a brochure for residents with information about how to care for public parks.
OS8	Identify and develop areas in the neighborhood that can be used for outdoor sitting, plantings and community gardens.	The city works to identify opportunities to create small outdoor sitting areas, and is currently planning to create such an area at the corner of Lopez Avenue and Charles Street, possibly to include community gardens as well.